

# THE TRAGEDY OF PASSION.

Scenes and Sensations from the Latest Production at the Broadway Theatre.

**"GUIDO FERRANTI."**  
A Striking Play of Love, Revenge and Hate, by an Apostle of Aestheticism.

**OSCAR WILDE IN EARNEST.**

Plot and Poem—Shakespearean Suggestions—An Inconsistent Lover—Duke and Duchess—Lawrence Barrett as Guido—Miss Gale's Lost Chance—"The Nominee" at the Bijou—"A Straight Tip" at the Park—Etceteras.

Mr. Oscar Wilde, the author of the tragedy of "Guido Ferranti," now running at the Broadway, may thank himself for the unflattering opinion of him held on this side the Atlantic.

It pleased him for some years to act the jester. He donned the motley and he shook his bells. And people took him at his own cheap estimate. They smiled and scoffed.

What wonder, then, if, as they looked back at his aesthetic freaks, some failed to see the real and serious merit of his play last week?

So widespread was the disrespect his name aroused that Mr. Barrett kept it off his playbill. Nor was it till the public had approved the play that he made known its author.

We have been told, and the internal evidence appears to prove, that "The Duchess of Padua" (as "Guido Ferranti" was first called) was an early effort. It bears the mark of youthful power and honesty. It has a youthful warmth and youthful passion. It needed youthful actors to interpret it. And it appeals to youthful audiences.

The talent it reveals is immature and wild and imitative, like that of a well read and gifted student. The fire which burns in every act is fierce, but like the hero's it is fickle and unsteady; it burns and it devours.

I have read more than one queer comment on this "Guido Ferranti." Something more cruel, the queerest view, I think, so far expressed in print is that which damns it because it is "too gloomy."

I never knew before that when a man wrote tragedies he was expected to make them light and sparkling.

But it would seem I had a wrong idea of tragedy. It should be farcical, not sorrowful. Poor Shakespeare blundered when he killed his Hamlet. Romeo should have lived on with Juliet. Macbeth should have turned monk and saved his soul.

Well, if Mr. Wilde has erred he has erred well and in good company. He did not dream that Hamlet would force face-tragedy.

His Guido and his Beatrice are not humorous. They are passionate and tragic. They die, in the last act, as Romeo died and Juliet. The play, alas, is very, very gloomy. It is also very strong.

The author is less happy in depicting character than in devising striking scenes and moving situations. The result of this play is first dramatic and only next is it poetical or psychological.

The hero is an inconsistent soul. So, you may say, is Hamlet. Yes, but Hamlet explains his inconsistency and Guido does not. He loves, he hates, he dreads, he fears, he sins and he repents, as the wind blows, nor can we tell why he is changeable.

Beatrice, his mistress, is more constant and intelligible. She has good grounds for loving and then hating, and when she loves again she has a motive. Indeed her very hate was love perverted—the love of a fond woman scorned and slighted.

The play, as it stood when Mr. Wilde evolved it, was longer and more complex than the Barrett version. It was cut freely and on the whole judiciously to suit the stage. As it now stands it is a splendid and effective play, marked by some bombast and some plagiarisms, but saved by its intrinsic force and interest, and needing only better acting than Miss Gale's and Mr. Barrett's to make it a lasting and a popular success.

The plot is laid in Padua. The time—the sixteenth century. The scenes at the Broadway are less Paduan than Venetian, and the costumes are of many periods.

Guido Ferranti mourns his father.

He is—  
—the son of that great Duke Lorenzo,  
Whose banner waved on many a well fought field  
Against the Saracens.

In the first act he hears the story of his father's death from Morano, his mentor, and vows revenge on his assassin, the Paduan Duke.

"Till my dear father's murder," he cries, "in blood I have avenged, I do forswear the noble ties of honorable friendship, affection's bonds and loyal gratitude, all love of women and the barren thing which men call beauty."

As he utters the words a procession issues from a church. A proud and lovely woman draws near him and his oath dies on his lips.

"Oh, who is that?" sighs Guido. A citizen replies, "The Duchess."

It is a case of mutual love at first sight, like Romeo's and Juliet's. But the curtain drops and it is not till the next act that we hear more.

The second act, which takes to the court, shows us the Duke, a dour and despotic tyrant, as dignified as Louis the Eleventh, as trustful as our old friend "King Lear."

The Duke commands his troops to quell a riot. His Duchess intercedes to save the people. Her lord and master sneers and ends by threats. He bids the Duchess not to leave the palace and when she ventures a, "Sir, by what right?" he answers—  
Nadim, my second Duchess,  
Asked the same question once. Her monument  
Lies in the Chapel of Bartholomew,  
Wrought in red marble, very beautiful,  
And leaves her.

As she is deep in prayer before the Virgin, Guido enters and his love finds words.

Oh, who is that? she asks.  
O dear Nadim!  
If I have been too daring pardon me.  
Thy beauty has my eager blood inflamed.  
Oh, let my reverent love be a white hand,  
For there is nothing that I would not do  
To gain thy love!

Guido pledged their faith when the hero exclaimed—  
There lies a barrier between us two  
We dare not pass.

And though the Duchess swears that she will follow him to the wide world over, recalling the mission he set himself, he turns away and leaves her to despair and loneliness.

This is but the first of Guido's inconsistencies. In the third act he acts more strangely still.

We find him in the middle of the night, stealing into the Duke's room intent on vengeance. But, at the very moment when he seems resolved, his conscience pricks him, he repents, and when his evil genius, Morano, follows him and bids him slay his father's sleeping murderer he answers,  
"No, I will not kill him."

"Why, what is life?" scoffs Morano.  
"I do not know, my lord," says Guido. "I did not give it and I dare not take it."

He will forgive the Duke, but he will teach him a lesson. To show him what a fate his crime deserves, he will lay his dagger on the tyrant's breast. As he extends the steps that lead to the Duke's bed the curtain falls. Beatrice steals out, white, stern and dreadful. (She should be all this, but she is not at the Broadway.)

Which brings us to one of the most striking scenes in the tragedy, a scene which, though of course it recalls "Macbeth," last Monday moved the house to something very like enthusiasm.

Beatrice. THE DUCHESS.  
Guido, what do you have so late?

O white and spotless angel of my life,  
Sure thou hast come from heaven with a message,  
That mercy is more noble than revenge?

THE DUCHESS.  
Ay! I do pray for mercy earnestly.

O father, now I know I do your bidding.  
For hand in hand with Mercy, like a god,  
Has Love come forth to meet me on the way.

THE DUCHESS.  
I felt you would come back to me again,  
Although you left me very cruelly.  
Let us get horses, I must post to Venice;  
They will not think of looking for me there.

THE DUCHESS.  
Never so much as now.

THE DUCHESS.  
Could nothing ever change you?

THE DUCHESS.  
The shipman's needle is not so sure  
Than I am to the lodestone of your love.

THE DUCHESS.  
There is no barrier between us now?

THE DUCHESS.  
I have seen to that!

Tarry here for me,  
I will return within a moment's space,  
But first I must repair to the Duke's chamber  
And leave this letter and my dagger here,  
That when he wakes—

THE DUCHESS.  
When you wake?

THE DUCHESS.  
Why, the Duke.

THE DUCHESS.  
He will not wake again.

THE DUCHESS.  
What is he dead?

THE DUCHESS.  
Ay! he is dead.  
I have just killed him!

Now, as Guido himself was meditating murder  
Just before, one scarcely expects him to be very  
hard on Beatrice. But she starts back from her  
horror and plays the Pharisee. His mistress, an  
embodiment of whole souled passion, pleads in  
vain.

THE DUCHESS.  
He was asleep.  
Come closer, love, and I will tell you all.  
Kiss me upon the mouth and I will tell you.  
You will not kiss me now? Well, you will kiss me  
When I have told you how I killed the Duke.

After you leave me with his bitter words  
I had resolved to kill myself to-night.  
About an hour ago I waked from sleep  
And took my dagger from beneath my pillow,  
And drew it from the sheath and felt the edge.  
And thought of you, and how I loved you, Guido,  
And turned to fall upon it, when I marked  
The old man sleeping, full of years and sin.

Suddenly, like a flame, there flashed across me  
This is the barrier Guido speaks of!  
I hardly know what happened,  
But a steaming mist of blood rose up between us two,  
And then the air rained blood, and then he groined,  
And then he breathed no more!

THE DUCHESS.  
Oh, horrible! Enough, enough!

THE DUCHESS.  
Will you not kiss me now?

THE DUCHESS.  
You remember saying that women's love  
Tears men to angels? Well, the love of man  
Tears women into martyrs. For his sake  
We do or suffer anything.

THE DUCHESS.  
O God!

THE DUCHESS.  
Let us go hence.

THE DUCHESS.  
Is not the barrier broken down between us?

THE DUCHESS.  
What would you more? Come, it is almost morning.

THE DUCHESS.  
O damned saint! O angel fresh from hell!  
What bloody devil tempted thee  
To kill thy husband, murder love, and in its place  
To set a horrible and bloodstained thing.  
Whose very breath breeds pestilence and plague  
And strangles love!

THE DUCHESS.  
I did it all for you.

THE DUCHESS.  
I would not have had you do it had you willed.  
For I would keep you without blot or stain.  
Oh, be kind to me, at all I will for you.

THE DUCHESS.  
No! Do not touch me.

THE DUCHESS.  
Between us lies the red stream of blood.  
I dare not kiss across it. When you stabbed him,  
You stabbed Love with a sharp knife to the heart.  
Yet is my love eternal!

THE DUCHESS.  
This is true poetry.  
While they stand gazing in each other's eyes the  
poison works, and Beatrice sinks back in the last  
agonies.

THE DUCHESS.  
Then Guido clasps her to his arms and kisses  
her. \* \* \* There shall be no more barriers be-  
tween them. \* \* \*

THE DUCHESS.  
As the bell ceases tolling and the guards ap-  
proach he stabs himself. And when they come to  
bear him off he dies.

She goes. But she returns with an escort of  
troops. She points to Guido.  
"That is the man who killed my lord," she cries,  
and Guido is arrested.

It may seem wicked, but I think there is no  
doubt that most of us were rather glad than sorry  
at the mishap of the hero. We had begun to see  
that he was not heroic. Indeed, we saw he had a  
touch of the cad in him.

Our sympathy goes back to him, however, in the  
next act.

He is brought before the Paduan Court of Justice  
and tried for murder. The Duchess watches the  
proceedings from her throne. She dreads lest  
Guido should denounce her and tries to get him  
silenced and condemned offhand.

THE DUCHESS.  
This is no common murderer, Lord Justice,  
Not a great outlaw  
Taken in open arms against the State.  
For he who slays the man who rules a State  
Slays the State also, widows every wife,  
And makes each child an orphan.

Then straightway pack him in that narrow house  
Where no voice is, but with a little dust  
Death slithers up the tiny mouths of men!

(To Guido.)  
This time, fair sir, I think the turn is mine.  
But the law is clear. The prisoner may defend  
himself. The fierce invective of the Duchess is in  
vain \* \* \* and after one of the most moving  
and dramatic episodes in the play Guido is given  
leave to speak.

What will he say?  
He hints at first at his own innocence. He asks,  
MR. GUNTER'S PLAY WHICH IS TO BE PRE-  
SENTED AT THE STAR THEATRE BY MR. SANGER.

MR. A. C. GUNTER'S play, "Mr. Potter of Texas,"  
which is said to have been written some time pre-  
vious to the novel of the same name, will be pro-  
duced at the Star Theatre to-morrow night by Mr.  
Frank W. Sanger. The play is booked for a run of  
six weeks, and Mr. Frank Mordant has been en-  
gaged to play the part of the ranchman, a well-to-do  
and wealthy citizen of the Lone Star State.

The scenes of the play are laid in England and  
France, and the play opens with the mother of Mr.  
Potter and his daughter Ida, in London, where he  
has gone to pay her a visit.

The second act takes place at Channel View, a  
pretty villa near Folkestone. All the characters  
are transferred to the Hotel des Bains-Boulogne  
in the third act, where Brackett, the Scotland  
Yard detective, is ordered to arrest the Texas de-  
pendant, Mr. Potter. Lady Annet's apartment in  
the same hotel is the scene of the fourth act.

In the fifth act, which is the last, the crime  
caused by her jealousy and love for  
him, and Mr. Potter brings down the curtain by  
making known the woman's perjury.

THE DUCHESS.  
Now, my Lord Justice, if I may crave a boon,  
Suffer me not to see another soul  
Light up the misery of this loathsome world.  
His boon is granted, and, as the Duchess totters  
forward and falls senseless, the guards remove  
him.

THE DUCHESS.  
Last scene of all in this eventful tragedy.  
Guido is in prison. His hour is near, but he  
sleeps. A cup of poison stands upon a table. He  
has been granted the alternative of suicide.

THE DUCHESS.  
The bells are tolling and the headsman waits.  
When the Duchess, disguised, enters the prison.  
She comes to save him.

THE DUCHESS.  
But feeling that her crime has done too deep for  
pardon, she drinks the poison she has taken for  
lover and tells him of her plan for his escape.

THE DUCHESS.  
He listens and refuses to avert his doom. This is  
heroic, but it strikes one as foolish.

THE DUCHESS.  
"What!" he cries, "Am I fallen so low, that I  
may not have leave to die for love?"

THE DUCHESS.  
For you see, by one of his many odd reversions,  
he has come to love as well as pity Beatrice once  
more. And he is sick of life.

THE DUCHESS.  
"I am a guilty woman," says the Duchess. But  
Guido will not hear of it.

THE DUCHESS.  
Guilty? Last those  
Who have not walked as we have done,  
In the red fire of passion, whose lives

are transferred to the Hotel des Bains-Boulogne  
in the third act, where Brackett, the Scotland  
Yard detective, is ordered to arrest the Texas de-  
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should be played with an intensity and truth of  
which Miss Gale is quite incapable.

I must content myself with a brief mention of  
the other plays produced last week.

Among them was a smart but very vulgar farce,  
"The Nominee," adapted from "Le Duet de Bon-  
homme"—a comedy—by Messrs. Lander Richard-  
son and Yardley. It was received at the Bijou with  
much favor. It suits the house.

"A Straight Tip" is another and a wilder farce, or  
rather farce-comedy, which has been stamped with  
the stamp of approval at the Park Theatre.

Besides these efforts we have had a new ballet  
("Dresden China") at the Opera House and two  
more Bavarian plays at the Amberg Theatre.

The Munich actors scored in both these last.  
The plays were "Der Protzenbauer" and "S.  
Nulken."

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